



July 2002

27 Wright scholars start work at AFRL

by Susan M. Barone, ASC Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Top-notch high school sophomores, juniors and seniors started their summer jobs this week as research assistants at the Air Force Research Laboratory.

The 27 students were selected from 129 local and out-of-state applicants received by AFRL's Propulsion Directorate in February to participate in the Wright Scholar research assistant pilot program.

"It was a blind review," said program coordinator John Horner. "We had no idea who these students were, what their background was, what high school they were from, or what affiliations they might have. The review was based on scoring criteria. We gave the student's GPA, for instance, a rank of one through five. We ranked their community service and extracurricular activities as well."

The committee looked for well-rounded people, not just the highest academic achievers, he said. For the pilot program, the directorate accepted students in grades 10 through 12 who qualified. Of the 27 students who were chosen, 19 high schools were represented. Next year, the directorate will accept only 11th graders, who will then stay with them for two summers.

"We had 20 from the 10th grade who applied, 96 from 11th grade and 13 from the 12th grade," said program administrator Rebecca Oriakhi. "We selected six 10th graders, 16 from 11th grade and five from the 12th grade."

"Students will assist in primarily in-house, on site research and apply their knowledge of chemistry, physics, and mathematics as used in various types of engineering careers," said Horner.

They also will participate in a jet engine propulsion short course, taught at the Air Force Institute of Technology, and attend weekly lectures with experts who will discuss propulsion and power technologies, such as the pulse detonation engine, scramjets, optics and lasers, combustion, rockets and plasma research.

When program coordinators shared with other directorates the overwhelming response they received, AFRL's Air Vehicles and Human Effectiveness directorates indicated an interest in participating. As a result, four students will work at the Air Vehicles Directorate, and one student will work at the Human Effectiveness Directorate.

"The larger intent for this program is to open it up across all directorates within AFRL at Wright Site," Horner said. "We realized that a significant number of people will be eligible for retirement in the next five to 10 years. We want to create this pool of highly qualified individuals who we can draw upon when it comes time to fill these positions." @

